

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15

CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06

PRS-01 L-03 IGA-02 IO-13 (ISO) W

-----192139Z 092331 /43

R 171255Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2797

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRIDGETOWN 1101

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PDEV, PINR, EAID, DO

SUBJECT: DOMINICA: INDEPENDENCE, SOCIALISM, EXTERNAL AID

SUMMARY:

DURING RECENT VISIT TO DOMINICA, I CONVERSED WITH SEVERAL GOD OFFICIALS, POLITICAL LEADERS AND OTHERS, WITH A VIEW TOWARD GAINING ADDITIONAL INSIGHT INTO SOCIO-POLITICAL TRENDS IN THE ISLAND. BASED ON THESE CONVERSATIONS, IT BECAME APPARENT THAT THE GOD IS DETERMINED THAT INDEPENDENCE SHOULD BE REALIZED ON NOV 4 THIS YEAR; THAT BOTH THE OPPOSITION AND LEADERS OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY ACCEPT INDEPENDENCE AS INEVITABLE, THOUGH THEY HAVE MISGIVINGS AS TO ITS CONSEQUENCES; AND THAT THE MAN IN THE STREET SEEMS UNENTHUSIASTICALLY DISPOSED TO FOLLOW GOVERNMENT'S LEAD. THE MAJORITY OF MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT APPEAR TO INCLINE TOWARD SOCIALISM OF ONE VARIETY OR ANOTHER, AND CASTRO-STYLE SOCIALISM IS BEING CHAMPIONED BY ROOSEVELT ("ROSIE") DOUGLAS, WHOSE OPERATIONS ARE THOUGHT TO BE FUNDED BY HAVANA. NOT ALL DOMINICANS ARE SOCIALISTS, HOWEVER, AND MANY REGARD US WITH FAVOR. NEVERTHELESS, ALL AGREE THAT THE ECONOMY IS IN SORRY CONDITION AND EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE IS URGENTLY NEEDED. MOST ARE PREPARED TO HAVE DOMINICA TAKE AID FROM ANY SOURCE, WITHOUT REGARD FOR IDEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

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SOON, THE USG WILL HAVE TO CONCERN ITSELF WITH CONDUCT OF BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND ROSEAU, AS WELL AS THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION IN INTERNATIONAL FORA. INDEPENDENT DOMINICA CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE SOCIALIST, AND THE ODDS ARE 50-50 IT WILL ULTIMATELY BECOME A CUBAN SATELLITE. THOUGH EMBASSY HAS ARGUED FOR BILATERAL ASSISTANCE TO STEM THE GRAVITATION TOWARD CUBAN-DOMINATED INDEPENDENT ISLAND

GOVERNMENTS, THE CHANCE OF SUCCESS IS CONCEDED TO BE LESS IN DOMINICA THAN ELSEWHERE. STILL, WE BELIEVE THE EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING RECENT VISIT TO DOMINICA, I HELD INFORMAL TALKS WITH PREMIER PATRICK R. JOHN AND MOST OF THE MEMBERS OF HIS GOVERNMENT, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION EUGENIA CHARLES, PROMINENT LOCAL BUSINESSMAN AND OTHERS. THREE THEMES -- INDEPENDENCE, SOCIALISM AND EXTERNAL AID-- DOMINATED THE SEVERAL CONVERSATIONS.

2. JOHN AND HIS COLLEAGUES IN GOVERNMENT HAVE SET NOVEMBER 4 OF THIS YEAR AS THE TARGET DATE FOR INDEPENDENCE AND ARE NOT PREPARED TO BROOK ANY DELAY. BOTH THE OPPOSITION AND BUSINESS COMMUNITY ACCEPT INDEPENDENCE AS INEVITABLE; MISS CHARLES CONTINUES TO CALL FOR A POPULAR REFERENDUM ON THE ISSUE, HOWEVER, AND MEMBERS OF HER PARTY, AS WELL AS LEADING BUSINESSMEN, HAVE MISGIVINGS AS TO THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF A CHANGE IN THE ISLAND'S CONSTITUTIONAL STATUS. THE MAN IN THE STREET SEEMS DISPOSED TO FOLLOW THE GOVERNMENT'S LEAD, THOUGH WITHOUT ENTHUSIASM. THE GOVERNMENT'S DRAFT CONSTITUTION PROVIDES FOR A PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY OF THE WESTMINSTER TYPE BUT WITH A VERY POWERFUL PRIME MINISTER. MISS CHARLES TOLD ME, HOWEVER, THAT SHE WOULD PREFER A REPUBLICAN FORM OF GOVERNMENT WITH AN ELECTED PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER, THE FORMER HAVING CONTROL OF THE DEFENSE AND SECURITY APPARATUS.

3. MOST MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT APPEAR TO INCLINE TOWARD SOCIALISM OF ONE VARIETY OR ANOTHER, AND MINISTER OF COM-
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MUNICATIONS AND WORKS MICHAEL DOUGLAS HAS PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED THAT, FOLLOWING INDEPENDENCE, DOMINICA WILL BE A SOCIALIST STATE. ONE OF DOUGLAS' MINISTERIAL COLLEAGUES, WHILE AGREEING THAT THE ISLAND'S FUTURE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT WILL BE SOCIALISTIC, ASSURED ME; "WE ARE NOT EXTREMISTS AND WE WILL NOT COMPROMISE OUR SOVEREIGNTY." NEVERTHELESS, CASTRO-STYLE SOCIALISM IS NOT WITHOUT ITS ADHERENTS, THE MOST PROMINENT OF WHOM IS ROOSEVELT "ROSIE" DOUGLAS, MICHAEL'S YOUNGER BROTHER, WHOSE OPERATIONS ARE THOUGHT TO BE FUNDED BY HAVANAN. THE GUYANESE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT ALSO HAS ITS ADMIRERS. NOT ALL DOMINICANS ARE SOCIALIST, HOWEVER, AND NOT A FEW FERVENTLY ADMIRE THE US, ITS WAY OF LIFE AND ITS VALUES. IN CONVERSATION WITH ME, FORMER DEPUTY PREMIER RONALD ARMOUR EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT THE US SHOULD MAKE A MUCH GREATER EFFORT TO INFLUENCE DOMINICA PUBLIC OPINION IN FAVOR OF FREE ENTERPRISE AND DEMOCRACY. CUBAN AND OTHER COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA HAS BEEN ENTERING THE ISLAND IN AN EVER-INCREASING STREAM, I WAS TOLD BY SEVERAL DOMINICANS.

4. THE GOVERNMENT, OPPOSITION AND BUSINESS COMMUNITY ALL AGREE THAT THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY IS IN SORRY CONDITION (THOUGH DISAGREEING ON THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUCH CONDITION) AND THAT EXTERNAL AID IS URGENTLY NEEDED. SOME HOPE THAT THE NECESSARY ASSISTANCE WILL COME FROM INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, OTHERS THAT THE USG OR CUBA/GUYANA WILL PROVIDE IT; MOST ARE PREPARED TO HAVE DOMINICA TAKE AID FROM ANY SOURCE AND WOULD DISREGARD IDEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS. MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS FERDINAND PARILLON TOLD ME: "TWO MILLION (DOLLARS) WOULD BE NOTHING TO THE UNITED STATES AND IT WOULD MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE TO US. BUT IF WE CAN'T GET AID FROM YOU, WE WILL GO WHERE WE CAN GET IT, AND INEVITABLY WE WILL REGARD THOSE WHO HELP AS BETTER FRIENDS THAN THOSE WHO REFUSE." (WHEN I OBSERVED THAT THE US WAS ALREADY FURNISHING ASSISTANCE THROUGH THE CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, HE REPLIED THAT SUCH AID

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WAS OF LITTLE OR NO HELP TO DOMINICA.)

5. WHAT I LEARNED IN THE COURSE OF MY VISIT TO DOMINICA WAS NOT NEW IN ITS ESSENCE; PRESS AND OTHER REPORTS REACHING THE EMBASSY HAD INDICATED THE WAY THINGS WERE GOING POLITICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY, BUT MY TALKS AND OBSERVATIONS SERVED TO MAKE THE PICTURE CLEARER. WHAT EMERGES IS A SERIES OF INTERRELATED DEVELOPMENTS WITH CLEAR -- AND, ON THE WHOLE, UNFAVORABLE -- IMPLICATIONS FOR US INTERESTS. FIRST, IT IS APPARENT THAT INDEPENDENCE IS IMMINENT, AND THAT THE USG WILL HAVE TO CONCERN ITSELF SHORTLY NOT ONLY WITH THE CONDUCT OF BILATERAL US-DOMINICAN RELATIONS BUT ALSO WITH THE DOMINICAN POSITION IN THE UN AND OAS. THERE WILL NO DOUBT BE DIFFICULTIES IN BOTH RESPECTS. SECOND, IT IS EVIDENT THAT AN INDEPENDENT DOMINICA WILL BE SOCIALIST, THOUGH WHETHER ON THE BRITISH, GUYANESE OR CUBAN MODEL REMAINS TO BE SEEN. GIVEN THE ISLAND'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF LEFTIST ELEMENTS, AND INCREASING CUBAN PROPAGANDA AND OTHER ACTIVITIES, THE ODDS THAT THE CUBAN MODEL WILL ULTIMATELY PREVAIL ARE 50-50. WHAT THE CREATION OF A CUBAN SATELLITE IN DOMINICA WOULD MEAN FOR US INTERESTS IN THE AREA DOES NOT NEED TO BE SPELLED OUT. FINALLY, THE GOVERNMENT'S EXPECTATION OF BILATERAL AID FOR THE US, AND THE THINLY VEILED THREAT THAT, IF NOT SO FORTHCOMING, CUBA MAY BE INVITED IN, SUGGEST THAT US AID POLICY IN THE EASTERN CARIBBEAN BE RE-EXAMINED. THE EMBASSY'S PARM SUBMISSION DEALT WITH THE ISSUE OF BILATERAL VERSUS REGIONAL AID AT LENGTH. THE ARGUMENTS ADDUCED IN FAVOR OF A CHANGE NEED NOT BE REPEATED HERE, BUT IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT WHAT WE SEE AS DESIRABLE FOR THE AREA AS A WHOLE SEEMS TO US TO APPLY WITH EVEN GREATER FORCE IN

DOMINICA, ONE OF THE TWO POOREST STATES IN THE EASTERN
CARIBBEAN. ADMITTEDLY, A BILATERAL PROGRAM MAY HAVE
LESS CHANCE OF SUCCESS IN DOMINICA THAN IN ANY OF ITS
NEIGHBORS, BUT WE BELIEVE THE EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE. TO
CONTINUE PRESENT POLICY AND LEAVE THE PEOPLE AND GOVERN-
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MENT WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT THE US HAS NO CONCERN FOR
THEIR PROBLEMS IS TO TIP THE SCALES EVEN FURTHER AGAINST
DEMOCRACY IN THAT HAPLESS ISLAND AND PERHAPS IN THE
CARIBBEAN GENERALLY.
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Message Attributes

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Secure: OPEN
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Subject: DOMINICA: INDEPENDENCE, SOCIALISM, EXTERNAL AID SUMMARY: DURING RECENT VISIT TO DOMINICA, I CONVERSED WITH
TAGS: PGOV, PDEV, PINR, EAID, DO, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/3438be92-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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